

CTE Perceptions Survey 2025

The Career and Technical Education (CTE) Perceptions Survey was developed and administered by the University of Central Missouri from January through February 2025 under the direction of the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). It was distributed as an electronic survey with data gathered in Qualtrics, a cloud-based platform that helps researchers create, distribute, and analyze surveys. After the survey's initial dissemination to multiple stakeholders statewide, DESE's CTE section sent weekly email reminders to continue emphasizing the survey's importance.

The survey included a series of questions asked of all respondents. These questions focused on general perceptions of CTE in Missouri. After respondents identified themselves as a student, parent/guardian, business leader, or educator, they were directed to questions that focused on CTE perceptions for that demographic.

In the general questions and those for each demographic, survey items asked participants to rate responses on a scale of "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree" and "Don't Know." For the purposes of this report, we grouped answers into responses of "Agree," "Disagree," and "Don't Know." There were also questions that asked participants to "Check all that apply," as well as open-ended questions where respondents could write comments.

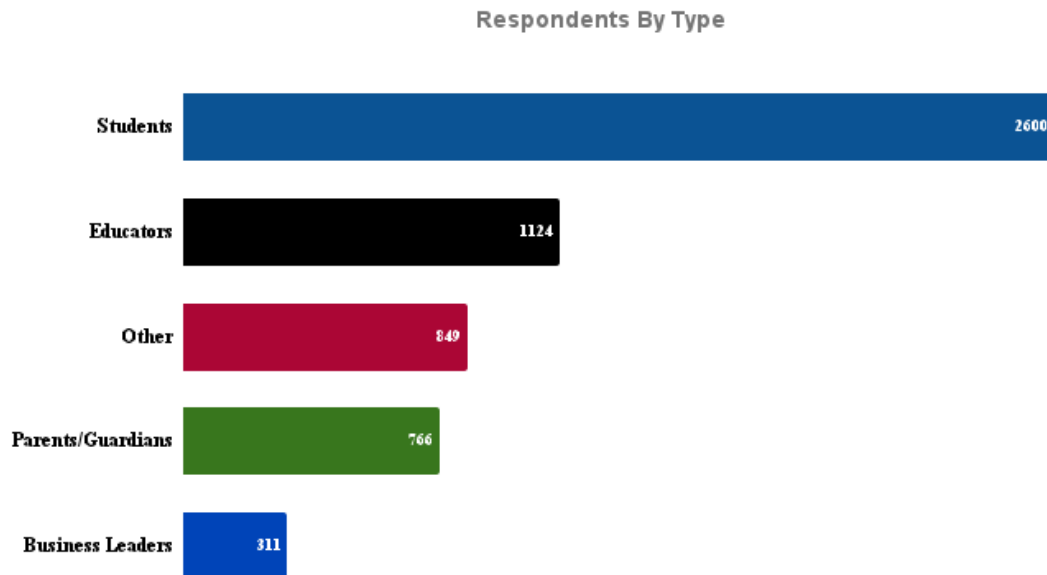
The survey received respondents from every county in Missouri.

There were a total of **5,650** respondents to this survey. Demographics are displayed in Diagram 1. The vast majority (N=2,600) identified as students. While "Business Leaders" were the smallest group of respondents (N=311), each leader represented a separate company or organization.

849 respondents selected the "Other" category. This category was mainly made up of community members, retired educators, CTE administrators, and school personnel among others.

Diagram 1

Respondent Demographics



Key Findings From All Respondents

CTE perceptions remain overwhelmingly positive across all respondents, as shown in Diagram 2, and there were increases in positive perceptions since the 2023 survey administration (see Diagram 3).

Diagram 2

All Respondent Perceptions

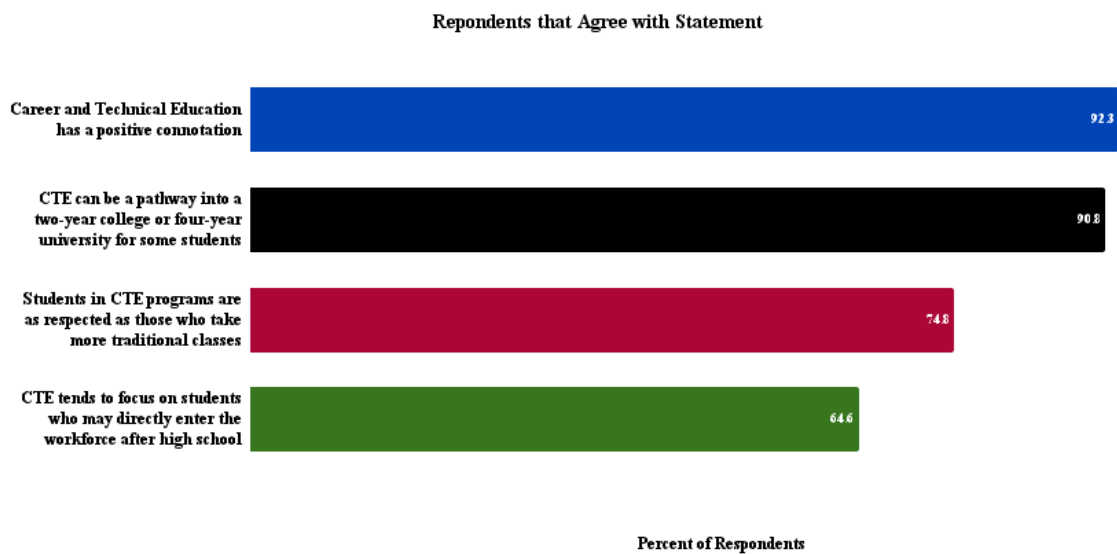
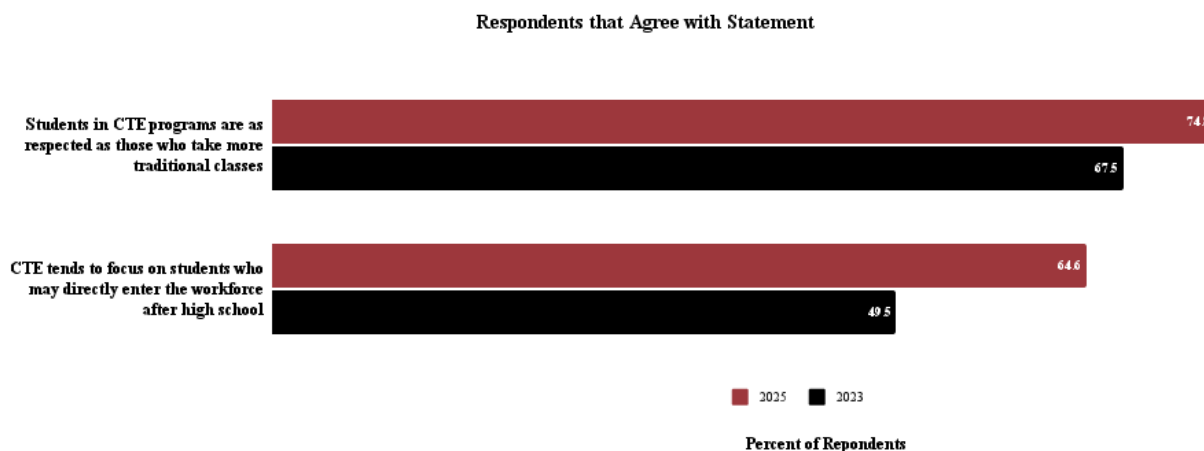


Diagram 3

2023 Comparative Data (where data were available)



Many respondents (90.8 percent) believe CTE is a pathway into college and 64.8 percent believe CTE is focused on preparing students directly for the workforce. Positive comments from participants included how CTE programs open doors for students, providing career exposure and skill-building opportunities in various fields. Comments included:

- “It gives students more opportunities to plan for their future.”
- “Preparing students for post high school success.”
- “Opportunities for high school students to earn workplace credentials.”
- “The hands-on experience that students gain.”
- “The opportunities for many CTE options to go straight into the workforce.”

Based on respondent comments, other strengths of CTE in Missouri include providing students with real-world applications and practical experiences. These comments included:

- “It is connected to real-world learning opportunities that align to the best research in learning methodology!”
- “The practical application of what is taught in CTE courses to the ‘real-world.’”
- “The opportunities that students gain for hands-on learning.”
- “Providing hands-on learning so students don’t just have knowledge but also experience in a technical area.”
- “The ability for all areas to work together to create real-world experiences that students can apply to their futures.”

Comments from participants that identified areas for improvement included recommending the expansion of CTE and course offerings which also included the need for increased funding:

- “There could be a wider range of options for classes to take.”
- “Maybe even more classes and disciplines?”
- “More courses and offerings.”
- “Funding and guidance.”
- “Change the mindset of administrators and counselors in high schools. . . . we have many academic classes that are required, why not CTE classes?”

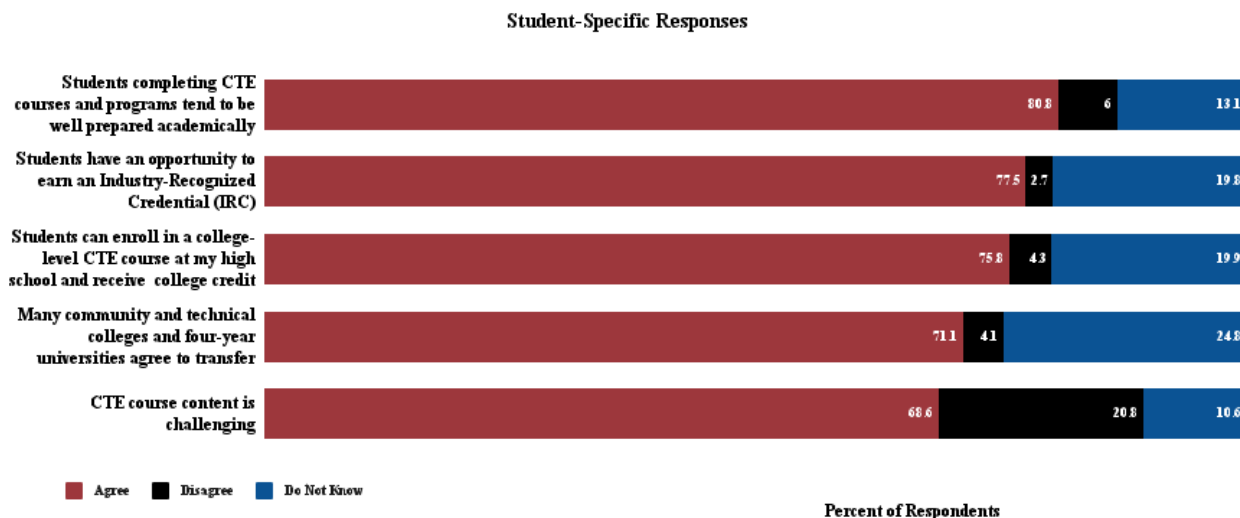
Student-Specific Responses

Students made up the greatest percentage of respondents to the survey (N=2600). Diagram 4 presents specific student responses. There were notable increases in the percentage of student respondents who agreed with the following statements in 2025 compared to 2023:

- Many community and technical colleges and four-year universities agree to transfer and accept CTE credits (2025=71.1%; 2023=55.9%)
- Students have an opportunity to earn an industry-recognized credential (IRC) (2025=77.5%; 2023=64.7)
- Students completing CTE courses and programs tend to be well-prepared academically (2025=80.8%; 2023=69.2%).

Diagram 4

Student-Specific Responses



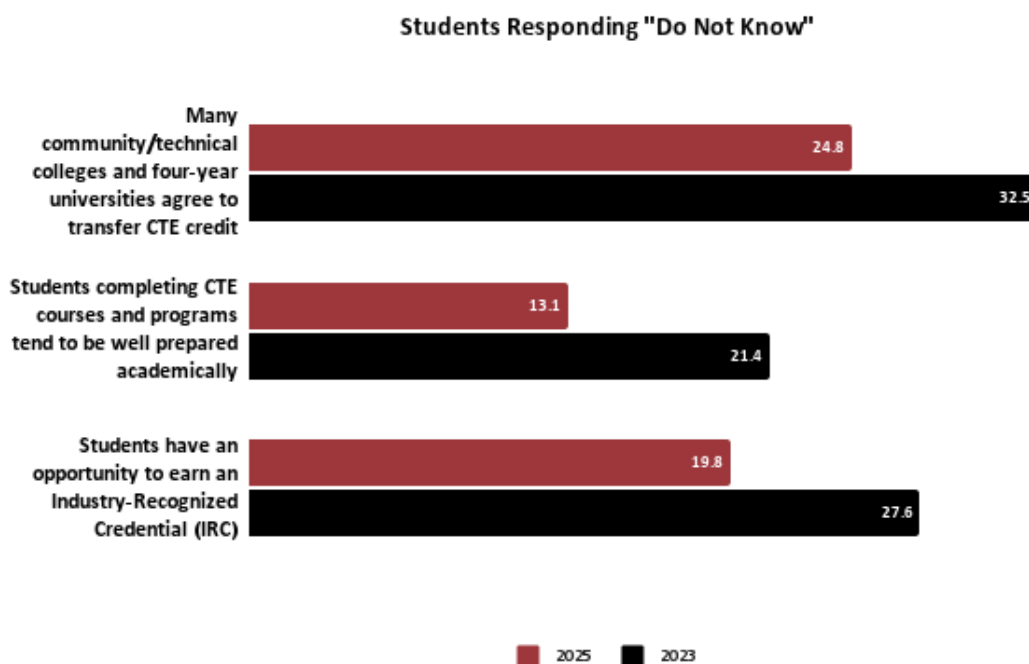
While these increases are positive, there are still some areas for continued improvement. Just under one third of students (28.9 percent) responded “Disagree” or “Do Not Know” to the statement, “Many community & technical colleges and four-year universities agree to transfer and accept CTE credit.” Over 20 percent of students responded “Disagree” or “Do Not Know” to the statement, “Students have an opportunity to earn an Industry-Recognized Credential (IRC) in our school’s CTE courses/programs.” More than 24 percent of students responded “Do Not Know” to the statement, “Students can enroll in a college-level CTE course or program at my high school during the school day and receive high school and college credit at the same time.”

Despite these high percentages, there have been improvements in student awareness, as indicated by the changes in percentages of students who “Do Not Know” in 2025 versus the previous 2023 results, as shown in Diagram 5. These improvements can also be seen in Diagram 5 in the percentage increase of students who agreed with these same statements.

While there have been improvements, there is still a need to improve communication and the promotion of CTE to students, as well as communicate the ways in which CTE credit can be transferred to two- and four-year colleges.

Diagram 5

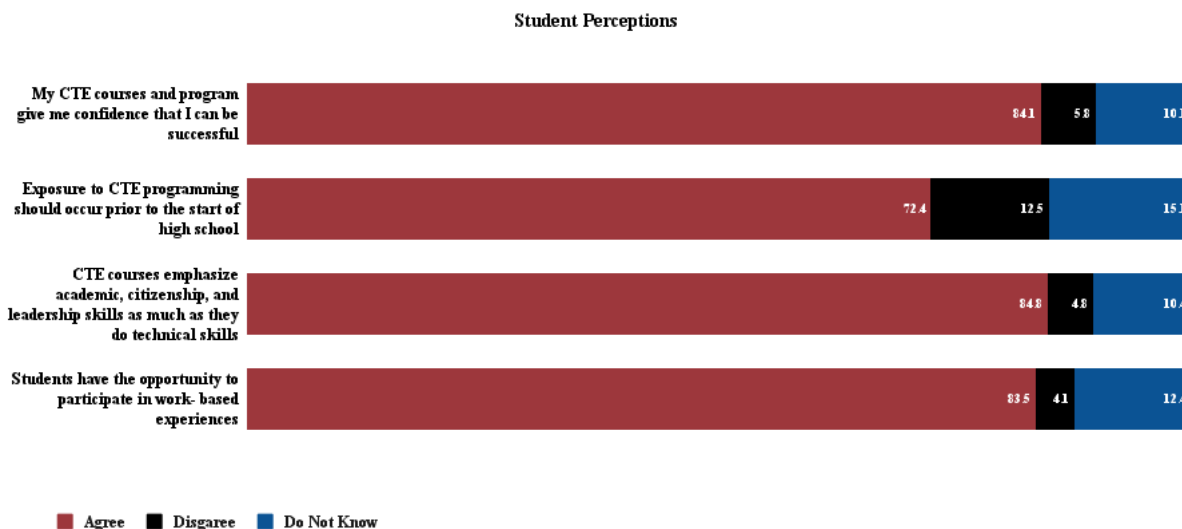
Percentage of Students: “Do Not Know” (2025 vs. 2023)



Additional student perceptions about CTE courses and programming are included in Diagram 6, including perceptions on gaining confidence, skills, and opportunities.

Diagram 6

Student Perceptions of CTE



There were many (299) positive comments when students were asked to comment on CTE in Missouri. Some of these include:

- “It is a good way to meet new people and do something you enjoy instead of sitting at school being bored.”
- “I believe CTE schools are a very necessary part of public education. They provide a fast and good pathway to careers not represented in a normal high school and even college curriculum.”
- “I believe it is a great program and helps many students learn skills and information they will need in the future. It can also help them determine their future career.”

Why Students Enroll

One of the student open-ended questions asked why they enrolled in a CTE program. The first theme to emerge from the comments was **career advancement**, which was mentioned 472 times. Most of these comments were specific to particular careers (mentioned 346 times), while other comments were related to college preparation (mentioned 105 times) or future preparation in general (mentioned 72 times).

Career comments related to career exploration included, “I wanted to know if a certain career was something I would really enjoy before I spend all the money on college,” and “CTE provides students with valuable career exploration opportunities, allowing them to gain insights into various industries and professions.” Other comments were related to skill development or early career preparation such as, “Because it gives us the skills and knowledge we need to succeed in high-demand careers,” “To get myself a head start into my career,” and “CTE provides not only career and academic skills, but soft skills that are needed for the modern workplace.”

Comments related to college preparation included earning college credits early, “So when I go to college, I could enter with college credits” and “To gain early and free college credit.” Others commented on college readiness, such as “I like to be as prepared as possible before doing anything (in this case, going to college/starting a job),” “It seems like this was one way that would really allow me to find a way to attend college,” and “I will enroll in a CTE program to get more confidence and education to get accepted to the college best for me when I graduate high school.”

Related to future preparation in general, student comments included:

- “I thought I would enjoy it and thought it would be my future career.”
- “I enrolled to learn more about the medical field for my future career.”
- “I chose to enroll in a CTE program because it would give me knowledge I could use in my future career.”
- “I chose to continue in my program after guidance from my amazing first-year teacher and family.”

A second theme that emerged related to why students enrolled in a CTE program was a desire for **career and skill development**, which was mentioned 253 times. Among these comments there were two main themes: gaining career-related experience, and gaining industry-specific training. Comments related to career-related experience include, “I enrolled to gain experience in my desired field, but also to see if it’s something that truly interests me” and “I enrolled to get a head start on something I found to have a passion for, liked it, and continued to do it.” Industry-specific training comments from students included:

- “I enrolled in this program to be able to get a head start in the medical field.”
- “I enrolled because a lot of real-world office jobs use apps and websites that I use in this class, so I will be prepared.”
- “I enrolled in a CTE course/program because I have a love of the automotive industry and helping people.”
- “I always wanted to be a teacher, so I decided to take early childhood courses to experience what it’s like to work with kids.”

When asked about CTE programs students would like to enroll in, but can not, there were a variety of responses (See Table 1). The most frequently mentioned were skilled trades.

Table 1*CTE Programs Not Available to Students*

CTE Program Area	Popular Fields	Selected Comments from Students
Skilled Trades (70 comments)	● Welding ● Construction ● Automotive ● Electrician	“I can’t participate in welding because of the age requirement.” “Automotive technology, I didn’t get a chance to sign up.” “A type of class I want to enroll in is construction. That’s the trade I want to take on, or construction management major for college.”
STEM (24 comments)	● Engineering ● Coding ● Robotics ● Computer Science	“An advanced engineering class and auto body class. They don’t have those classes.” “I wanted programming, but there are no courses.”
Healthcare & Medical (17 comments)	● Nursing ● Doctor ● Health Careers	“There was a nursing course, but in the area I’m in, they’re not accepting new students.” “The healthcare program has limited spots, and I missed the application deadline.” “I would like to participate in some of the CTE courses offered, like the advanced healthcare program . . . I can’t participate due to scheduling conflicts with my current courses.”
Business & Finance (16 comments)	● Marketing ● Finance ● Entrepreneurship	“I want to participate in a business class in the Career Center, but I’m not in 11th grade.” “I want to take management and finance and foundations in teaching, but I don’t have room in my schedule.” “My schedule was already full, so I couldn’t take accounting.”

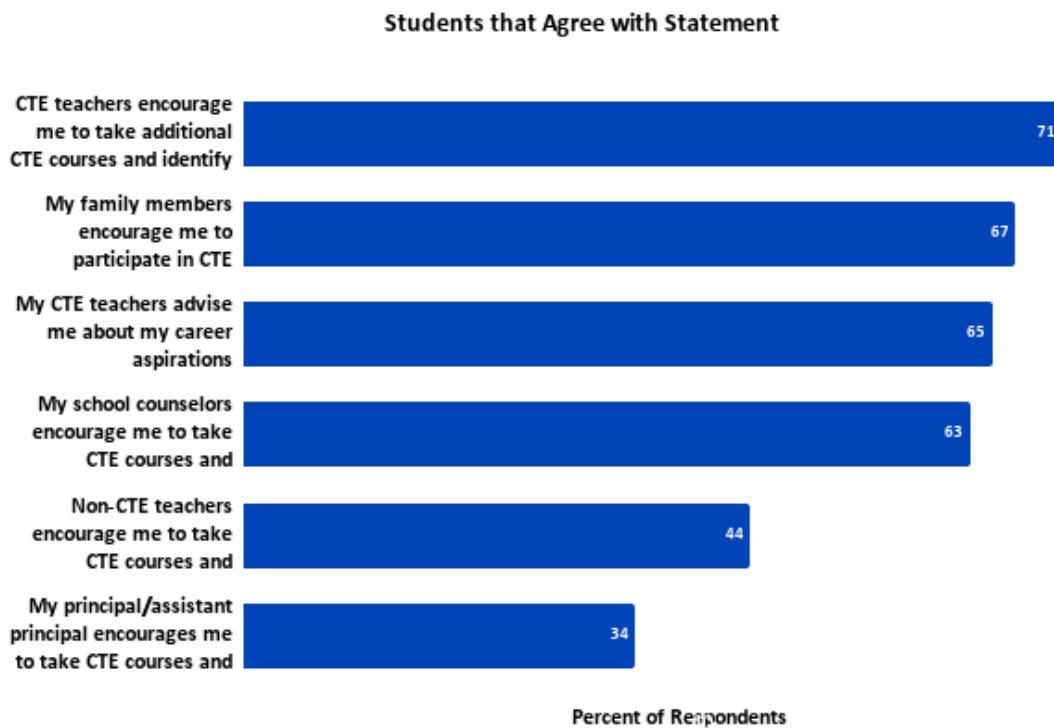
Influences on CTE Enrollment

CTE teachers were the greatest influencers of students taking CTE courses (71 percent) and advising them in their career aspirations (65 percent). Family members (67 percent) and counselors (63 percent) were also strong encouragers for students to participate or investigate CTE programming. Non-CTE teachers (44 percent) and high school principals/assistant principals (34 percent) were those identified the least by students.

Diagram 7 provides an overview of those who have the greatest influence on student choices related to careers and taking CTE courses.

Diagram 7

Influence of Others on Students



When asked to provide additional comments about CTE in Missouri, students also suggested improvements for CTE programs. Student suggestions included:

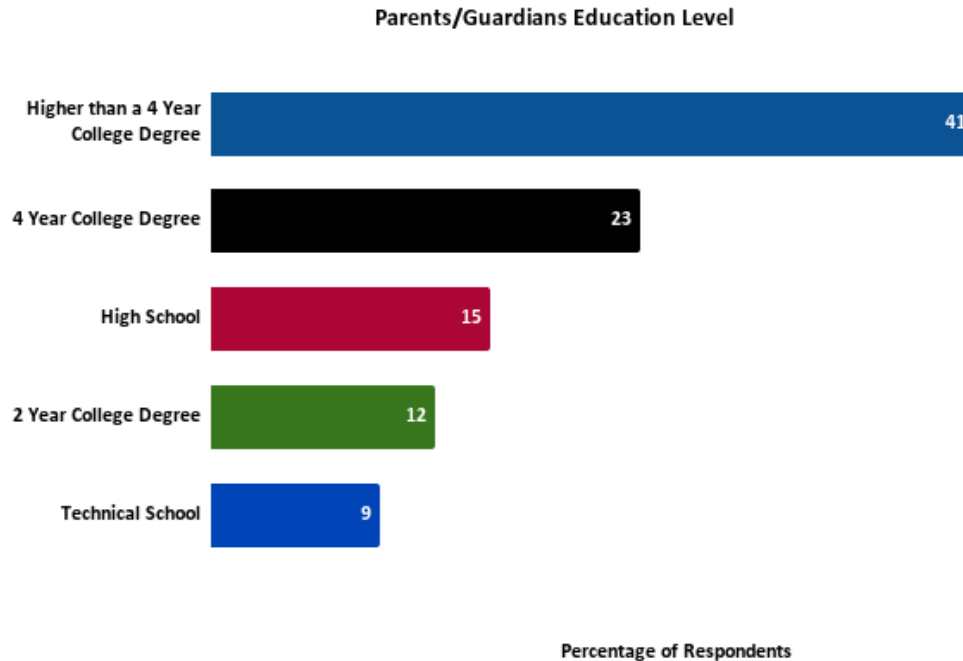
- **Curriculum enhancements:** (31 mentions) Suggestions for more hands-on learning and expanded career-based courses.
- **Better awareness:** (14 mentions) Some students need more information on available opportunities.
- **More accessibility:** (11 mentions) Students want additional programs and expanded access. Some students face logistical challenges, like tardiness due to school timing.

Parent/Guardian-Specific Responses

Parent/Guardian responses made up approximately 13 percent of the total survey respondents (N= 766). Parents/Guardians own education levels (Diagram 8) ranged from higher than a four-year college degree (41 percent) to technical school attendance (9 percent).

Diagram 8

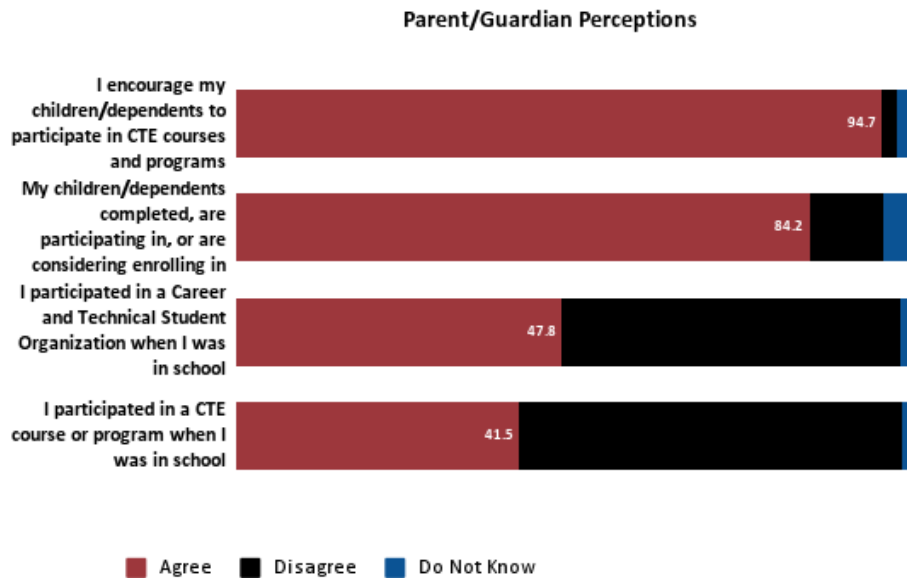
Parents/Guardians Education Level



Most parents indicated they encourage their children/dependents to participate in CTE courses and programs (94.7 percent) and about 84 percent of their children/dependents have participated in or are considering enrolling in a CTE course, even though less than half of parents/guardians indicated they had participated in a CTE course or program when they were in school. This reinforces the positive image parents have of CTE programs and services, and affirms the link between parents and student participation in CTE programs. Parent/Guardian-specific responses are displayed in Diagram 9.

Diagram 9

Parent/Guardian Perceptions



When asked about their own participation in CTE in school, 142 parents/guardians mentioned having no experience. Of the parents/guardians who did comment on their own participation, there were 129 comments related to Agriculture, 84 related to Business & Marketing, 47 mentions of Engineering & Technology, 46 related to Health & Medical, 14 for Culinary & Hospitality, and 7 for Education & Child Development.

Parents/guardians also indicated a variety of reasons their student did or was going to enroll in CTE courses with four main themes emerging (See Table 2).

Table 2*Parent/Guardian Reasons for Student Participation*

Themes for Responses	Selected Comments
Career Interest & Future Plans (131 mentions)	"Matches future plans." "They want to pursue a career in it." "He was interested in cybersecurity."
Curiosity & Exploration (39 mentions)	"She was curious about culinary arts." "They were interested in those areas for future exploration."
Program Appeal (21 mentions)	"They like the program." "It's a good fit for their learning style."
Family Influence (7 mentions)	"Older son was interested in the medical field and encouraged younger sibling."

Overall, parents/guardians were positive and satisfied with CTE in Missouri. Diagram 10 provides an overview of those who agreed, disagreed, or did not know for specific items. Notably, almost 82 percent of parent/guardian respondents were satisfied with CTE offerings and 80 percent agreed there were a variety of skills emphasized in these programs. As displayed in Diagram 12, these are approximately 20 percent and 12 percent increases, respectively, from the 2023 survey administration. There were also significant decreases (25 percent decrease) in the number of parents who did not know if they were satisfied from the previous administration of the survey, from 31 percent in 2023 to only 6 percent in 2025 (See Diagram 13). A similar, though not as drastic, 14 percent decrease can be noted in the variety of skills emphasized, from 27 percent responding "I don't know" in 2023 to 13 percent in 2025.

Diagram 10

Parent/Guardian Specific Responses

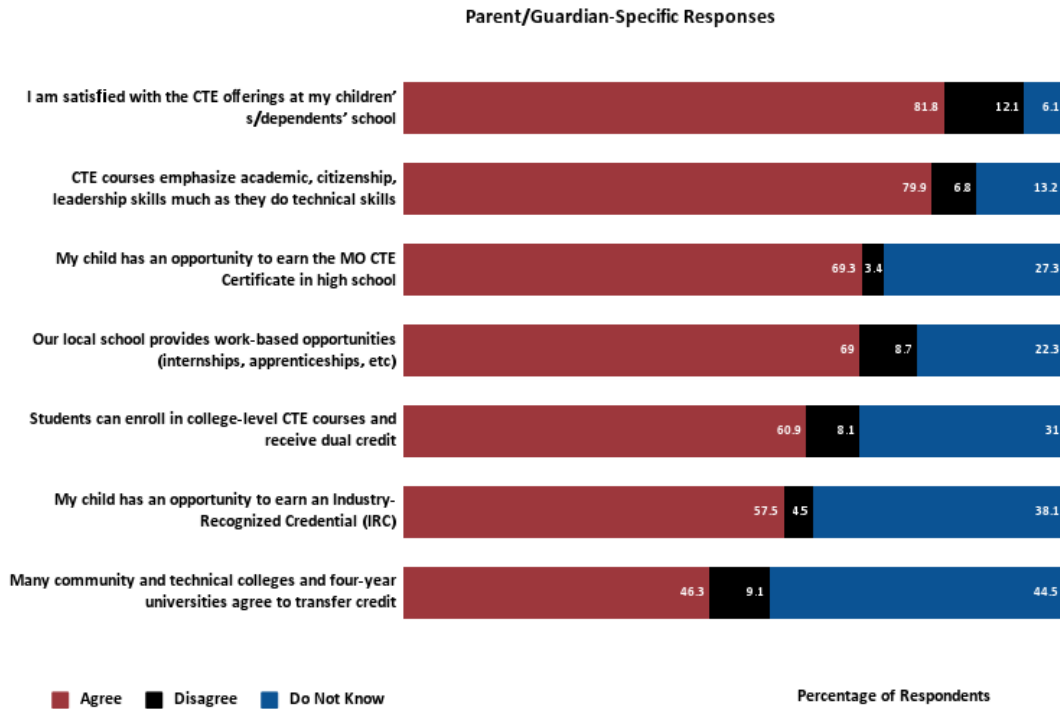
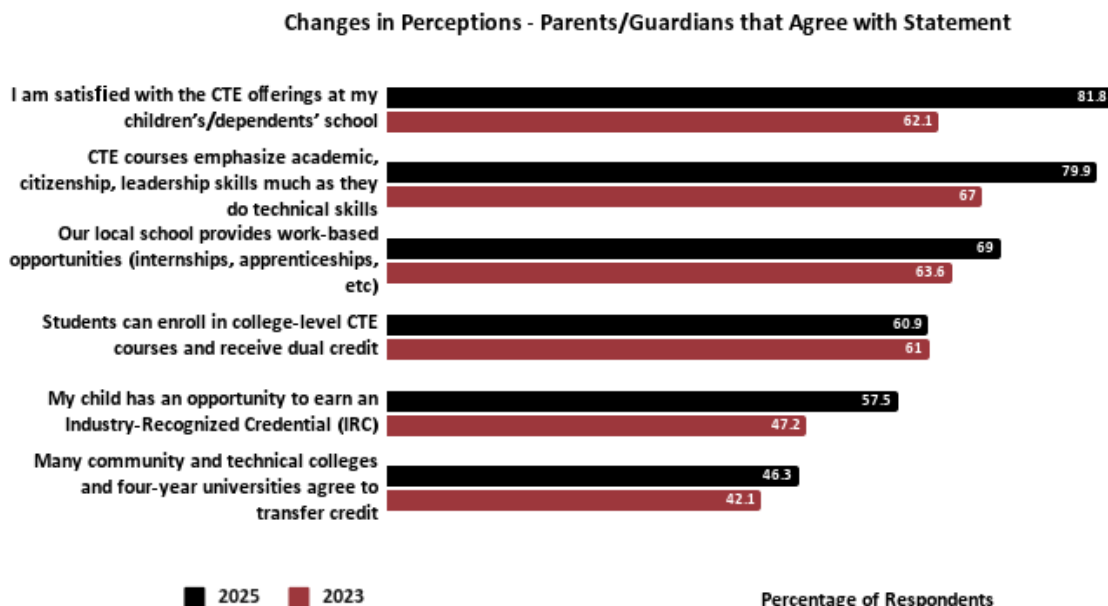


Diagram 11 also demonstrates a 10 percent increase in parent/guardian agreement with their child having the opportunity to earn an IRC.

Diagram 11

Changes in Parent/Guardian Specific Responses (2025 vs. 2023)



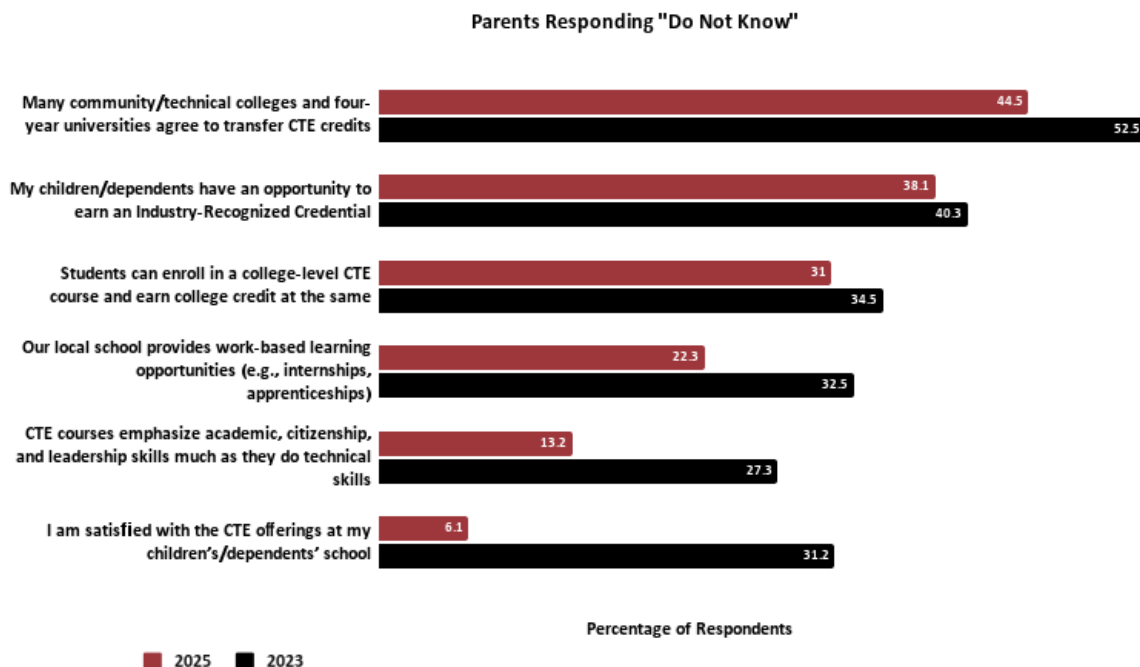
The data displayed in Diagrams 11 and 12 together, though, tell another story of where there are opportunities for improvements in Missouri's CTE programs.

Diagram 11 indicates very little change in the perceptions of parents/guardians in work-based and transfer credit opportunities (only about 5 percent increases) and no change in the agreement with students being able to earn dual credit. There are also significant numbers (see Diagram 12) of parents/guardians who still indicate they “do not know” about opportunities to earn college credit (31 percent) or if colleges will transfer CTE credits (44.5 percent). When added with the number of parents/guardians who disagreed with these statements, about 40 percent responded “Disagree” or “Do Not Know” to the statement, “Students can enroll in college-level CTE courses and receive dual credit.” More than half of parents/guardians responded “Disagree” or “Do Not Know” to the statement, “Many community colleges, technical colleges, and four-year universities will transfer and accept my children's high school CTE credits as meeting their degree requirements (e.g., articulated credit).”

More than 30 percent of parents/guardians also responded “Disagree” or “Do Not Know” to the statement, “My child has an opportunity to earn the Missouri CTE certificate in high school.” Forty percent (40 percent) of parents/guardians also responded “Disagree” or “Do Not Know” to the statement, “My children/dependents have an opportunity to earn an Industry-Recognized Credential (IRC) in our school's CTE courses/programs.”

Diagram 12

Parents Responding “Do Not Know” (2025 vs. 2023)



When asked why their children/dependents did not have an opportunity to enroll in CTE courses or programs, responses were related to scheduling conflicts and limited availability. Comments included:

- “School only allows three electives, and one has to be PE or Health.”
- “Not enough room in schedule for CTE courses.”
- “My child is involved in music activities, so they cannot take CTE classes.”
- “Not offered at their high school.”
- “No access to PLTW classes until high school.”
- “Mandatory requirements prevent enrollment in CTE.”

While overall perceptions are positive and parents/guardians are becoming more aware of opportunities for their children/dependents, there are still areas of growth in parental/guardian awareness, particularly related to program availability, and work-based opportunities, as well as streamlining college credit, credit transferability, and scheduling conflicts.

Educator-Specific Responses

Educators who responded to the survey (N=1,124) were teachers, counselors, and administrators who work with students in middle school (N=254), grade 9 (N=479), grade 10 (N=527), grade 11 (N=732), grade 12 (N=746), and postsecondary/adult education (N=271) (see Diagram 13). Note that teachers and administrators work across multiple grade levels, so the total number of responses will be lower than adding the numbers per grade level, but this demographic provides a perspective on the variety of educators who participated in the survey.

Diagram 13

Teachers, Counselors, & Administrators by Grade Level

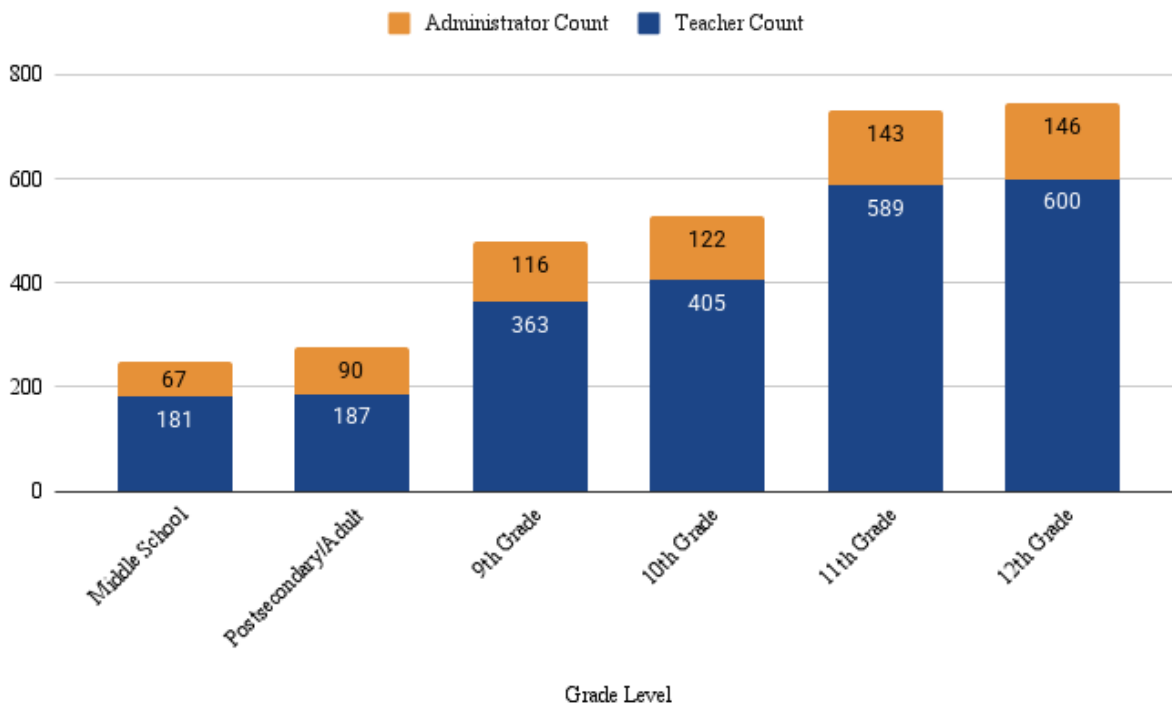
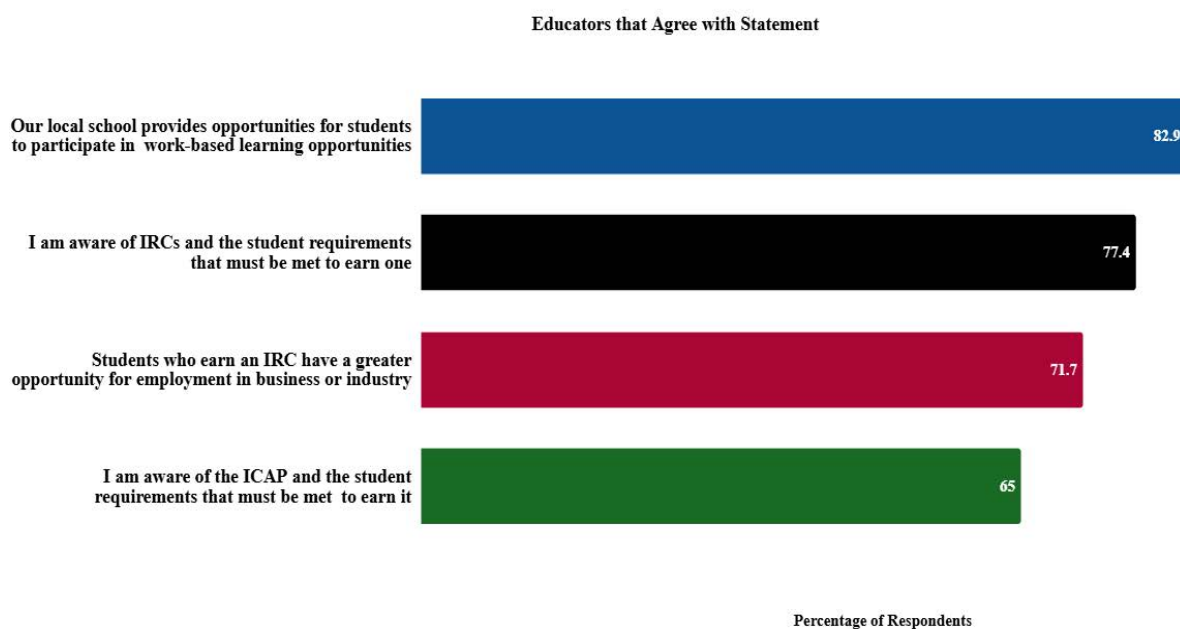


Diagram 14 summarizes the perspectives from the responses from educators. Notably, 83 percent agree that students have opportunities for work-based learning. While 77 percent are aware of student requirements for earning an IRC, this also means that more than 22 percent responded disagree or “Do Not Know.” Educators agreed that students who earn an industry credential have greater employment opportunities (72 percent).

Diagram 14

Educator Responses



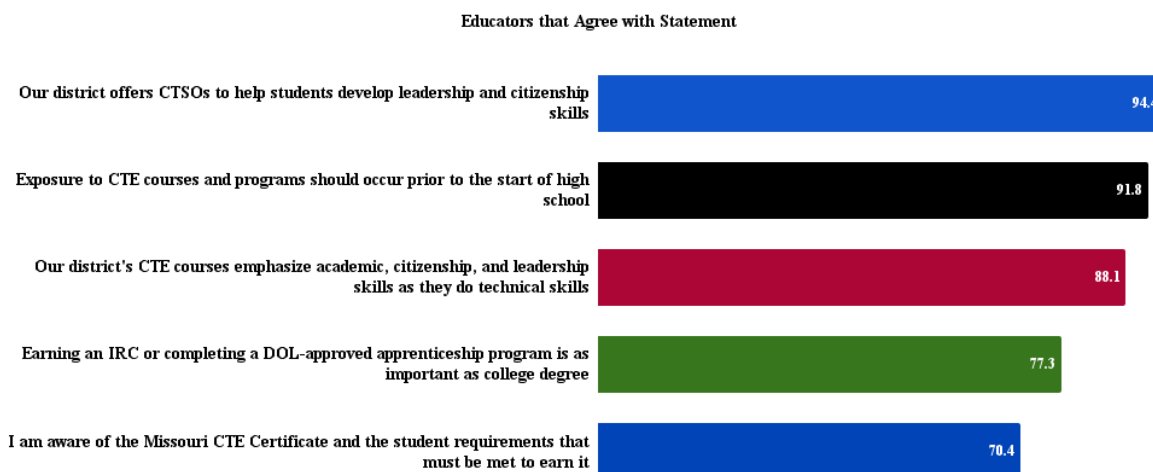
Educator perspectives on CTE are summarized in Diagram 15. Educators overwhelmingly agreed that CTE programs offer students opportunities to develop leadership and citizenship skills through CTSO involvement (94 percent) and academic, citizenship, leadership, and technical skills through CTE courses (88 percent).

Educators believed that students needed exposure to CTE courses and programs prior to high school (almost 92 percent) and that earning an IRC or apprenticeship program is as important as a college degree (77 percent).

Nearly 30 percent of educators responded “Disagree” or “Do Not Know,” however, to the statement, “I am aware of the Missouri CTE certificate and the student requirement to earn it.”

Diagram 15

Educators’ Perspectives



Educators also commented on the need for quality counseling, indicating a gap in advising students about CTE pathways and the benefits of CTE programs, as well as counselors’ roles for targeted CTE recruitment. Some comments included:

- “Counselors need additional exposure to CTE opportunities. Having certified guidance counselors who are trained only in education and have not experienced employment in other industries often means they lack enthusiasm for CTE recruitment. I’ve worked in CTE schools for over 10 years, and counselors from traditional schools rarely boosted enrollment.”
- “DESE needs to reinvent the role of a CTE-certified counselor. There should be avenues for workforce professionals to obtain counselor or administrative certification while continuing their CTE employment.”

- “Guidance counselors often lack exposure to CTE opportunities. Missouri should reinvent the role of a CTE-certified counselor or offer stipends to CTE staff for recruitment efforts.”
- “I’m an advocate. I do wish that regular ed administrators and counselors did not put the negative stigma on it and knew we have offerings for all students and pathways, not just for students who struggle academically.”

When asked about CTE programs students desire but do not have access to, educators also shared a variety of responses (see Table 3). Again, the most frequently mentioned were skilled trades.

Table 3

Educator Perspectives of CTE Programs Not Available to Students

CTE Program Area	Popular Fields	Selected Comments from Educators
Skilled Trades (163 comments)	● Culinary Arts ● Cosmetology ● Law Enforcement ● Welding	“Welding-specific program. We have Ag Structures and they practice welding, but it isn’t a true welding program.” “CNC machining, cosmetology, warehouse, logistics, construction, home repair & remodeling, nail tech, theater tech, esthetician/makeup.” “Culinary Arts, Cosmetology.”
Business & Finance (26 comments)	● Marketing ● Accounting ● Business Law	“We have marketing but need additional higher-level business courses that support CTSOs.” “More business-oriented courses at the middle school level.” “Business law and economics.”
Healthcare & Medical (14 comments)	● Nursing ● Medical Fields ● Pharmacy-related Careers	“Nursing.” “Biomedical.” “Dental Science, Pharmacy Science”
STEM (9 comments)	● Computer Science ● Coding ● Engineering	“Engineering, animation, video game creation, something in the flight field.”

Related to availability, educators also added additional comments about access to CTE programs:

- “Welding and CTE for students with special needs.”
- “Anything above an introductory level class (in my department), because there are not ‘enough’ students signing up (8 is not enough for Advanced Textiles, but 6 qualifies for adding another calculus class).”
- “We could use more business in the middle school.”

- “Our middle school students would like to see CTE courses which would help them get started in the fields they’re interested in. Many of them are not interested in college and already plan to go into the workforce after high school.”
- “Nursing (that scaffolds in English learners).”

Educators contributed many additional comments about CTE in Missouri. These comments fell into four themes: 1) Support for CTE; 2) Challenges & Stigma; 3) Workforce Demand & Skills Gaps; and 4) Policy & Funding Needs. The following can be drawn from the comments in each theme:

Support for CTE

- Personal Impact: Some respondents credit CTE for their own career success.
- Workforce Preparation: CTE is seen as a vital solution for addressing workforce gaps and reducing student debt from unnecessary degrees.
- Missouri’s Leadership: Some respondents commend Missouri’s efforts in expanding and supporting CTE programs. Strong CTE leadership from DESE is recognized and appreciated.
- CTE as a Stronger Alternative to Traditional College Routes: Some students find CTE more effective at preparing them for life and careers than traditional high school graduation pathways.

Challenges & Stigma

- Graduation & Integration: There's a concern that CTE is seen as separate from traditional education rather than part of core graduation requirements.
 - Some respondents feel that CTE should not be treated separately from standard graduation requirements.
 - Some respondents called for reducing rigid core graduation requirements in favor of more CTE-focused coursework and IRCs.
- Career Counseling & CTE Awareness: Counselors with traditional educational backgrounds lack direct experience in CTE fields, which reduces effective career advising and recruitment efforts.
- Innovative Scheduling & Early Workforce Integration: Some respondents call for innovative high school structures to support CTE programs. Proposals include scheduling academic coursework in the morning and hands-on job experiences in the afternoon, allowing students to earn internships, job placement, or college credits.
- Facilities & Resources: Requests for updated equipment, larger classrooms, and reduced class sizes highlight infrastructure challenges.

Workforce Demand & Skills Gaps

- CTE is Essential for Workforce Readiness: Respondents strongly support CTE as a direct pathway to employment for students who do not pursue a four-year degree. Many respondents shared personal success stories, stating they entered the workforce immediately after high school using the skills gained in CTE programs.
- Barriers to Work-Based Learning: Smaller communities and emerging industries struggle to provide internships, job shadowing, and apprenticeships due to a lack of industry partnerships.
- Strengthening Industry Partnerships: Schools need better alignment with businesses and post-secondary institutions to smooth the transition from high school to career paths.

Policy & Funding Needs

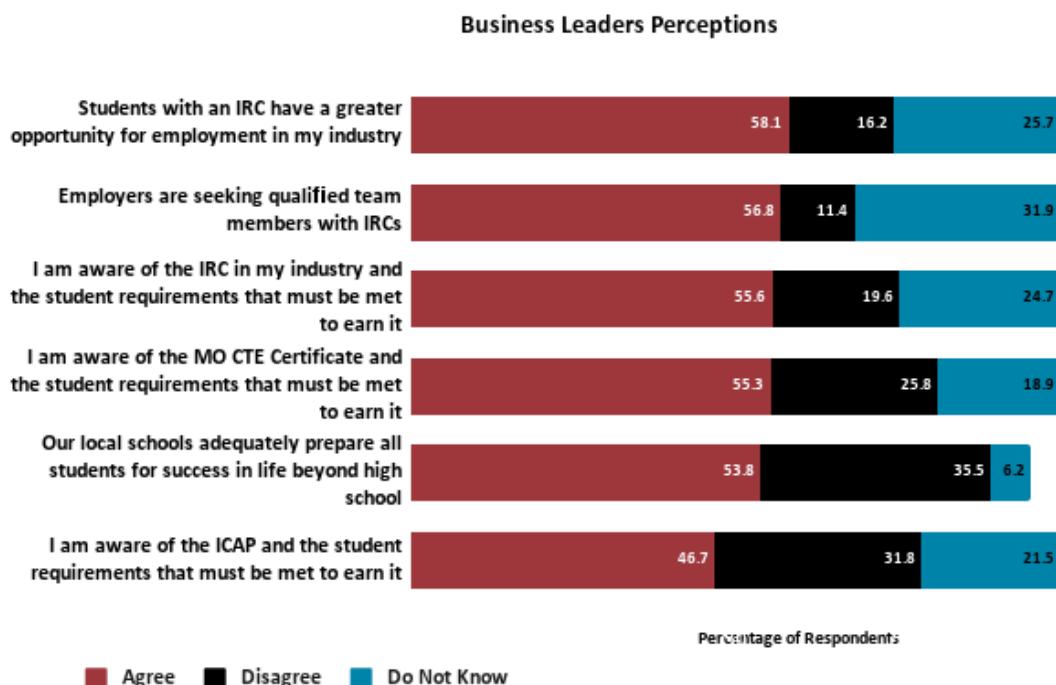
- Respondents highlight the lack of financial support for CTE certificates and advocate for state-level funding similar to A+ scholarships.
- Continued investment in CTE programs, equipment, and facilities is critical to being competitive, including access to state and federal funding, including Perkins V funds, to expand and modernize offerings.
- Modernizing graduation requirements could allow more students to engage in CTE without sacrificing academic credits. Expanding work-based learning, career counseling, and industry partnerships is a priority.
- Policymakers should support policies that increase student access to work-based learning opportunities, including paid apprenticeships and industry partnerships.

Business Leader-Specific Responses

Business leaders who responded to the survey (N=311) were asked personal perspective questions regarding their thoughts on opportunities in their industry, the preparation schools provide, opinions on CTE program specifics (credentials, student requirements, CTE certificate), and what they believe employers want. These responses are displayed in Diagram 16.

Diagram 16

Business Leader Personal Perspectives



Notable in these personal perspectives is that more than half (almost 57 percent) of business leaders responded “Agree” to the statement “Employers are seeking qualified team members with

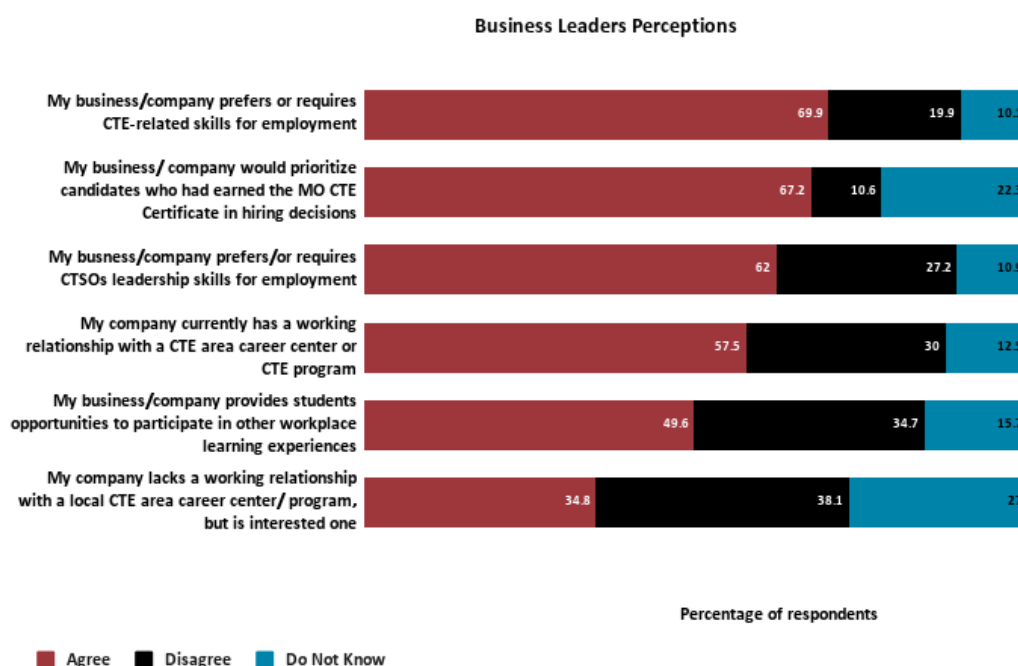
IRCs.” Only a small percentage disagreed with this statement (11 percent), many (32 percent) did not know.

Some business leaders agreed with the statements regarding specific CTE program requirements for students, but many also disagreed or did not know. These specific requirements within CTE programs included obtaining IRCs, information on the individual career and academic plan, and earning the CTE certificate.

When asked questions related to business leaders’ perceptions of CTE experience and skill development, business leaders perceptions were positive, with almost 70 percent agreeing that they prefer or require CTE-related skills for employment, 67 percent prioritizing candidates who earned the CTE Certificate, and 62 percent preferring or requiring CTSO leadership skills (See Diagram 17).

Diagram 17

Business Leaders Perceptions

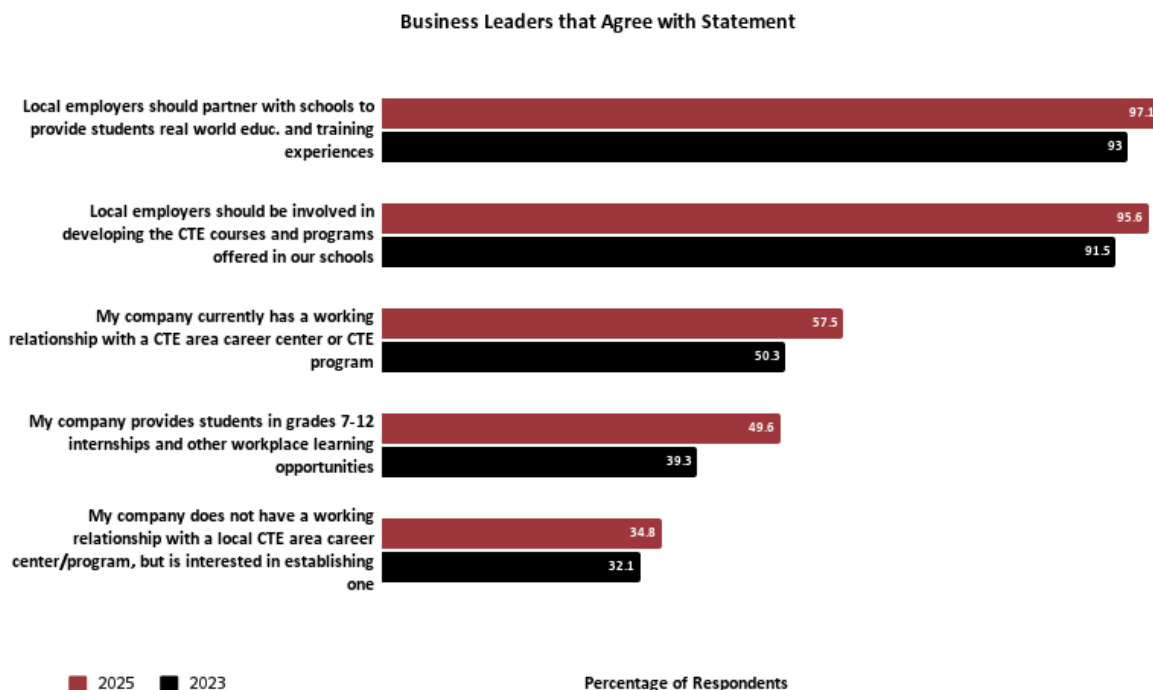


More business leaders also agree that local employers should work with schools to provide students real-world education and learning experiences and desire to be involved in the development of schools’ CTE courses and programs. When comparisons are made to previous survey data (See Diagram 18), more businesses indicate they have a working relationship with a CTE area career center or CTE program (57.5 percent in 2025 compared to 50.3 percent in 2023) and more businesses are providing students in grades 7-12 internships, externships, apprenticeships, and other workplace learning opportunities (49.6 percent in 2025 compared to 39.3 percent in 2023).

The working relationships between local career centers/programs and businesses, however, still need attention, as almost 35percent of employers agreed that they do not have a relationship but are interested in establishing one. This is an opportunity for CTE programs to grow opportunities for students.

Diagram 18

Business Leader Perception Changes (2025 vs. 2023)



Business leaders also made comments about CTE programs that fell into three themes: CTE program impact and importance, funding and support, and program expansion and development (Table 4).

Table 4

Business Leaders' Perspectives of CTE Programs

Theme	Selected Comments from Business Leaders
CTE Program Impact and Importance	“These programs are essential in maintaining the workforce.” “CTE is impactful for students in the immediate and long term.” “Continuing education and career advancement opportunities are essential for success.” “Participation will allow for a faster track in the workforce.”

Funding & Support	“We need to put our money where our mouth is.” “More investment is needed in these programs.” “In some cases, we will help find and pay for classes.” “Encourage bonus incentive/curriculum cost coverage.”
Program Expansion & Development	“More focus on life and career management skills.” “Students need better career exploration opportunities.” “Would love to see an LPN and LPN to RN bridge program.” “More opportunities for students in rural areas.”

Overall Findings

Opinions on CTE are overwhelmingly positive (92.3 percent). Respondents view CTE as one pathway into higher education for some students (90.8 percent), as well as an opportunity to prepare students with leadership and citizenship skills (82.4 percent), and for what’s next in their lives (85.4 percent).

While many findings can be drawn from the data collected through the 2025 CTE Perceptions Survey, there are some key takeaways when responses are compared. These include ideas related to CTE program expansion, expansion of work-based learning opportunities, educators’ emphasis on the CTE certificate, possible disconnects with IRCs, college credits, and innovative academic integration.

CTE Program Expansion

All stakeholder groups emphasized the need for more and effective CTE pathways. Comments indicated a clear need for increasing access to skilled trades with students and parents/guardians commenting most on welding, building trades, and automotive careers, and educators noticing a need for increased welding, culinary arts, cosmetology, and law enforcement programs. STEM career pathways including computer science, engineering, and coding were also identified among constituents, along with healthcare and medical fields including nursing, doctors, and other health careers like dental programs. Business and marketing programs such as marketing, finance, accounting, and entrepreneurship were also identified.

Comments from constituents also indicated a need to consider increased career exploration options at the middle school level and access for English language learners and students with special needs. Rural area options need to be considered as well. CTE curriculum should also be enhanced with increased hands-on and work-based learning opportunities. Facility updates and funding support were also identified as obstacles to expanding CTE programs.

For CTE programs to grow, there is also a need for knowledgeable educators. Specifically, counselors were identified as needing additional exposure to CTE opportunities and there was even a call for rethinking the career experience and career advising role of counselors. Non-CTE

teachers and administrators were also identified by students as the least likely to encourage their enrollment in CTE programs.

Expansion of Work-based Learning Opportunities

Educators agree (83 percent) that students have opportunities for work-based learning with business leaders overwhelmingly (96 percent) agreeing that local employers need to partner with schools to provide real-world experiences for students. More businesses also indicated they have a working relationship with a CTE area career center or CTE program in 2025 (57.5 percent) compared to 2023 responses (50.3 percent), and more businesses are providing students in grades 7-12 internships, externships, apprenticeships and other workplace learning opportunities (49.6 percent in 2025 compared to 39.3 percent in 2023). Almost 35 percent of employers, however, agreed that they do not have a relationship with a CTE program/career center but are interested in establishing one. There is an opportunity, then, to expand opportunities with business and industry partners. Comments revealed that smaller communities and emerging industries struggle to provide work-based learning opportunities due to lack of industry partnerships. The question that arises, then, is how do the right opportunities connect with the right programs and students?

Educators' Emphasis on the CTE Certificate

Business leaders' perceptions of CTE experiences and skills developed through CTE programs were positive. Business leaders agreed (70 percent) that they prefer or require CTE-related skills for employment, 67 percent prioritizing candidates who earned the CTE Certificate, and 62 percent preferring or requiring CTSO leadership skills. Given the support of business leaders, there needs to be a clearer emphasis on the CTE certificate and the requirements among educators.

Possible Disconnect of Industry-Recognized Credentials (IRCs)

Related to IRCs, educators are aware of the requirements for earning an IRC (77 percent agreed) and students agree they have opportunities to earn IRCs (77.5 percent agreed). Educators also agreed that students who earn an IRC have greater employment opportunities (72 percent).

Parents and guardians, however, still may not be aware of this opportunity (60 percent agreed). There is a disconnect, though, that 57 percent of business leaders agreed that employers are seeking team members with IRCs, but 11 percent disagreed and 32 percent did not know. This leaves questions about the true value of IRCs for industry partners. Are there credentials that are more valuable than others? Are credentials needed in some content areas, but not as much in others? Are the credentials available to students at the high school level the credentials that are needed in the field?

College Credits

Students agreed (71 percent) that many community and technical colleges and four-year universities agree to transfer and accept CTE credits. However, there were a significant number of parents/guardians who indicated they disagreed or "did not know" about opportunities to earn college or dual-credit (40 percent) or if colleges will transfer CTE credits as meeting degree requirements (55.5 percent). Perhaps more clear pathways and articulation agreements are needed to better communicate these opportunities with all stakeholders.

Innovative Academic Integration

The idea of innovative academic integration is one that emerges only from the open-ended, qualitative comments provided by survey participants. Some students mentioned scheduling adjustments are needed for participation in CTE programs. Parents and guardians were the main influence on students taking CTE courses and programs, with 94.7 percent of parents/guardians encouraging their children/dependents to participate. Their comments echoed those of the students, though, identifying scheduling conflicts with required courses or other activities, or limited availability.

Educators then identified clear barriers for CTE programs, as CTE courses are seen as separate from traditional education rather than part of core graduation requirements. Educators commented on the need for innovative high school coursework and structures with greater access to work-based learning and early workforce integration opportunities. With business leaders indicating a desire to work more closely with and support CTE programs through workplace learning, there may be opportunities to rethink the modern classroom and learning pathways. As these ideas only emerged from participant comments — stakeholders were not specifically questioned on these — perhaps additional information should be gathered to explore innovative options related to integrating CTE more fully into the academic school structures and requirements for graduation to also serve Missouri’s workforce needs.